

It's always been a cognitive dissonance for being a social scientist. That is why social sciences have remained sidelined and a forsaken discipline not even in Pakistan but all over the world. When I observed and compared the infrastructure of the social sciences and the natural sciences, it is clear that the former is treated step-motherly all over the world. This was a jarring experience for me, so I decided to gauge this discriminatory treatment by comparing the infrastructure of the two disciplines. Whenever I step into a natural sciences building, it makes me wonder with its design, mechanical services, lighting and electrical efficiencies, hydraulics, waste and emissions, all of which have been carefully considered to hit key energy targets. Visitors to these buildings can view data in real time via the interactive display screens located on each level.

The differential treatment of the social and natural sciences is emphasized in the poor approaches to research and development of the former at the public sector universities. The social sciences have meagre, limited facilities, with outdated books and journals in the libraries. No interactive displays there. Natural sciences, on the other hand, have lion's share of funding and research support. Many social scientists believe their achievements are unrecognized, especially when compared with the works of those in the natural sciences. Just to make it clear, I am classifying the following as natural sciences here: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In more general, holistic terms, we have tried to order our experiences of being human by classifying our thinking in manageable 'bites'. Overall, the social sciences try to explain our social interactions, understanding and experiences, which include philosophy, religion, literature, music, art, psychology and other human sciences. Within this broad field, the natural sciences are subsumed, and have the role of easing our living in the natural world through their laws and technological applications. Social sciences are expected to help governments address important social and political challenges. For example, understanding the role of *madrassas*, but many academics in the field feel their research is ignored.

Several factors contribute to the undervaluing of the social sciences. The natural sciences have more practical value, being linked through their discoveries, applications for industry and commercial wealth. I have surveyed the views of some social scientists, they believe that the main problem is that while the government is ignoring or undervaluing the social sciences, it is still attempting to control what social scientists do. They also said that Higher Education Commission, since its inception, had always allocated the lion's share in the funding for the natural sciences. The dramatic increase of PhDs and postdoctoral fellowships in the natural science disciplines could possibly be due to this support.

One social scientist said, "In my opinion, because of the rise of capitalism the subjects that have economic impact are valued more. For example, economics, business, marketing, management, organizational psychology, but, on the other hand, philosophy, literature, languages are not valued because you cannot earn much with these subjects." Because of the dominance of capitalism, the values of the societies are also influenced by capitalistic values in monetary benefits. So, money making subjects have more social value than the subjects that have less power to earn.

Funding agencies claim to support research that has an impact on society for financial gains, but such agencies also assume that social sciences have a narrow scope of what constitutes useful and impactful work. Hence, natural sciences are always preferred over social sciences and humanities as the need of the hour. In this case, the role of social scientists as critical thinkers and rationalists is being ignored, which is another common view. On the ground, too, the situation of social sciences at the higher education level is even more depressed. Promoting natural science and engineering subjects has been the prime focus of not only the government and policymakers, but also the parents and the wider society.

There should be a win-win possibility if the government begins to encourage students to adopt social sciences at school level, and also provide incentives to scholars to do research in the social sciences. Some other initiatives such as social sciences research council should be established for funding projects and research support. HEC should allocate equal proportion for funding to social sciences and highlight the efforts of social scientists through media.

I guess with the passage of time, when humans will be bogged down by living under extreme stressful capitalistic life, they will need the social sciences more. They will need literature, music, art, psychology, religion and other human sciences to understand more and to keep them sane and balanced.